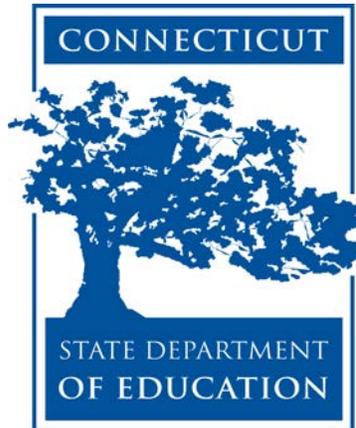


Connecticut Department of Education



At a Glance

STEFAN PRYOR, Commissioner

Established - 1838

Statutory authority - Sec. 10-3 (1949), Revised (1969) Sec. 10-3a CGS and Sec. 10-4(a) CGS

**Central office – 165 Capitol Avenue,
Hartford, CT**

Number of employees – 1,699

Recurring operating expenses - \$2,769,371,240

Capital outlay - \$8,846,764

Value of real property - \$672,331,480

Number of full-time secondary students 10,765

Number of part-time adult-student registrations – 2,449

Organizational structure – see attached organizational chart

Mission

The Connecticut State Board of Education will provide leadership that promotes an educational system supporting all learners in reaching their full potential.

Statutory Responsibility

Under Sec. 10-3a of the Conn. Gen. Statutes, the Department of Education is the administrative arm of the State Board of Education, which is responsible for implementing the educational interests of the state from preschool through Grade 12.

Under Sec. 10-4(a) of the Conn. Gen. Statutes, the State Board of Education provides leadership and promotes the improvement of education in the state. Specific functions carried out by the Department of Education include leadership and communication with the state's 166 school districts, charter schools and regional educational service centers; research, planning, evaluation, educational technology (including telecommunications); the publishing of guides to curriculum development and other technical assistance materials; the presentation of workshops and other professional development for educators and leaders; teacher and administrator certification; oversight of teacher preparation programs; data collection and analysis; and the administration of annual standardized assessments.

Connecticut's 13-member State Board of Education is responsible for "general supervision and control of the educational interests of the state, which interests shall include preschool, elementary and secondary education, special education, vocational education and adult education." Sec. 10-4(a) further defines the educational interests of the state as including ". . . the concern of the state that (1) each child shall have for the period prescribed in the general statutes equal opportunity to receive a suitable program of educational experiences. . ."

The Governor, subject to the approval of the General Assembly, appoints members of the State Board to four-year terms.

The State Board and Department of Education also protect the educational interests of the state by serving school districts and teacher preparation programs at Connecticut's public and private higher education institutions. Among the Department's many partners are parent and teacher groups; the six regional educational service centers; nonpublic schools; public and independent colleges and universities; and the Connecticut Departments of Children and Families, Developmental Services, and Corrections.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy declared 2011–12 as the year for education reform. In December, Gov. Malloy outlined six key principles to guide this effort, which culminated in Public Act 12-116, *An Act Concerning Education Reform*. The Governor signed the bill into law in May.

The State Board of Education approved a reorganization plan for the State Department of Education, which laid the essential groundwork for realizing reform by creating the structure and capacity to carry out legislation and other measures under consideration this year. Reorganized divisions and bureaus will support top-level personnel in the Department. Highlights of the reorganization plan include the following:

- The chief academic officer will focus on the Governor's goal of "creating academic excellence for all." The CAO will work with education stakeholders leaders to fully align curricula, instruction, assessment, and professional development with the new Common Core State Standards. The CCSS support our goal of preparing all students, regardless of socioeconomic circumstances, for college and career. The Academic Office houses three critical functions:

1. Division of Curriculum Standards and Instruction

The division's most important responsibility is providing leadership and guidance to educators, parents, and children throughout the state in the process of implementing the new

Common Core State Standards with fidelity. These new standards provide clear learning objectives for each child in kindergarten through Grade 12 in core subjects like math, English language arts, and science. These new standards are fewer, more clear, and more focused than our prior standards and offer three critical strategic advantages:

- The CCSS have been adopted by 45 other states and therefore provide a first time opportunity for cross-state collaboration and innovation regarding education resources and instructional strategies across the country.
- Student, school, and statewide performance against the CCSS will be measured with common assessments across the country. This will allow more transparent and comparative indicators of student progress — helping parents and children and teachers understand more learning progress and learning gaps more precisely.
- The CCSS are progressively aligned to what students need to understand in order to be prepared for college and career, and they are also benchmarked against international standards — providing Connecticut and its students an opportunity to compete effectively in the global economy.

Other responsibilities of the division include collaborating with the Talent Office and the higher education community to prepare a high-quality early education workforce; establishing teaching and learning standards in all content areas and domains, prekindergarten through Grade 12, and providing professional development and technical assistance to districts and community programs to ensure effective instruction; and providing graduation requirements that reflect the skills necessary for college and career readiness. The bureau oversees and administers over \$500 million dollars in federal and state funds to support these priority areas.

2. The Bureau of Student Assessment.

Besides overseeing valid and reliable assessments using the current summative assessment regime, the Bureau of Student Assessment is leading the state's planning and development of transition efforts toward the new Common Core-aligned Smarter Balanced Assessments. This transition will be complete in 2014–15 school year. The Bureau of Student Assessment is providing critical support and numerous leadership roles in the 26-state consortium that developing the Smarter Balanced Assessments as well as the technology platform that will ultimately deliver these new computer adaptive tests for all relevant grades and subjects — as well as interim tests that provide educators with early or midyear indicators of student progress.

The bureau manages the development, administration, scoring and reporting of the results of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), the CMT and CAPT Modified Assessment System (MAS), and both the CMT and CAPT Skills Checklists. The bureau also coordinates the statewide participation of districts in the administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); is developing and administering online benchmark assessments for Grades 3 through 8 in mathematics, reading and writing; and conducts ongoing research to improve the quality of its assessment system. The primary responsibilities of the bureau are to develop valid and reliable

assessments of student academic performance for the state's public school testing programs and to produce complete, accurate, and timely reports of testing results that can be used to inform public school personnel and other stakeholders in their efforts to improve teaching and increase student learning. To this end, the bureau provides comprehensible student academic performance data, analyses and reports to schools, districts, parents, other state education agencies and the public to inform decisions pertaining to curriculum and instruction. Finally, the bureau is responsible for the analysis of student assessment and other educational data to comply with federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reporting requirements, new requirements under Connecticut's waiver from parts of NCLB, special education settlement requirements, and ad hoc requests to support proposed legislation or litigations against the state.

3. The Bureau of Early Learning

This bureau's responsibilities include providing funding and standards for high-quality preschool education for 3- and 4-year-olds living in high-need districts; provides ongoing systematic professional development in the use of the Preschool Curriculum Framework (PCF) and Preschool Assessment Framework (PAF) to ensure all early childhood educators have the knowledge and skills to prepare children for future school success.

- The chief talent officer will implement strategies in pursuit of the Governor's fifth principle: to develop and attract a first-rate, diverse corps of educators to Connecticut's classrooms, principals' offices, and district offices by improving the entire professional experience and human resource system for teachers and leaders. This will include working collaboratively around the state to develop and expand robust and meaningful professional development to recruit, train, prepare, and certify the highest quality teachers for Connecticut schools. The Talent Office will also work collaboratively with all education stakeholders to produce a fair system of educator evaluation. Finally, the Talent Office will work with all levels of the education system to support and implement more meaningful professional learning programs for teachers, principals and other school leaders in the state.

1. Division of Educator Evaluation and Professional Learning

Develop Educator Evaluation Guidelines: Working with statutorily defined stakeholders, the Department completed and the State Board of Education has adopted new Educator Evaluation Guidelines and has chosen 11 districts that have volunteered to serve as pilot districts in the coming 2012–13 school year; training of administrators in the new observation methods will begin in August 2012. The new guidelines emphasize student learning and growth as the basis for the professional appraisal. Forty-five percent of an educator's evaluation is based on student growth using multiple indicators of academic growth and development, 40 percent on observation of educators' practice and performance; 10 percent on parent or peer feedback; and 5 percent on whole school student learning indicators or student feedback. The guidelines identify four categories for evaluating educators: exemplary, proficient, developing and below standard. The full rollout of these new guidelines will occur during the 2013–14 school year. The division is working with the pilot districts and numerous stakeholders to guide these pilots, gather lessons learned and disseminate information to all school districts in the state.

Evaluation systems are meaningless without linkages to robust professional learning programs. This division will provide leadership and guidance to districts throughout the state to ensure pilot and permanent teacher evaluation systems are aligned to effective ongoing professional development programs that target specific needs of each educator — so they can continuously improve their impact on student achievement.

2. Division of Leadership Development

This division will oversee the Department’s development of school and district leadership development programs. These programs will emphasize the changing roles of school leaders in the context of 21st century skills, learners, and technologies. The division will also oversee a campaign to improve and expand the pool of talent that Connecticut attracts to its educator profession and also to remove obstacles to alternative pathways to the teaching profession.

3. Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification

Educator Certification: The central work of the Bureau of Educator Certification continues to be the processing of new applications for educator certification, and renewing or advancing existing certificates through the certification continuum. The goal of this work is to ensure that only well-qualified educators are authorized to serve in Connecticut public school classrooms as quickly as possible.

Over 27,000 applications were received in the 2011–12 fiscal year. The bureau continues to improve the new online Connecticut Educator Certification System (CECS), which allows a greater percentage of applicants to submit applications and/or fees online. It also facilitates electronic correspondence, nearly eliminating the need to send letters by U.S. mail to ask for additional documentation of credentials. This has resulted in sharply reduced paper and postage costs both for the state and for educators. The improved Web access has eliminated the need to print forms and other documents. As the system is improved, it has become easier for educators to navigate. It is easier and quicker to apply than ever before, and the bureau’s efficiency in processing applications has also improved. Over 60 percent of applications available on the CECS are now received electronically.

Beginning Educator Mentoring Program: Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 10-145o called for the establishment of a “teacher education and mentoring program that includes guided teacher support and coaching and the completion of instructional modules” for all beginning teachers. This was the first year of implementation of the new Teacher Education and Mentoring Program (TEAM). Through individualized and ongoing coaching, beginning teachers have benefitted from the strong support provided as they develop and become more effective teachers. Ultimately, Connecticut’s students are the intended beneficiaries collectively of the resulting improvements in effective teaching practices.

To ensure that beginning teachers receive quality support and guidance, all mentors are trained according to specific guidelines for the TEAM Program’s professional growth module process and principles of good coaching. Additional training is provided to administrators and district facilitators who support teachers in the program and to educators

who are trained to review the reflection papers produced by beginning teachers. Technical support is provided to districts to assist with the implementation of the program.

In this first year, the bureau developed a four-step professional growth process for each professional growth module. Staff also developed a data system for local and regional school districts to access resources and record-keeping tools to manage the TEAM program at the local level, as well as for beginning teachers and mentors to document the professional growth process. Bureau staff trained over 8,600 mentors, as well as over 1,400 educators to review the reflection papers submitted by beginning teachers. Approximately 4,600 beginning teachers were mentored and supported during this first year.

An independent evaluation of the program is currently underway that will involve all participants — beginning teachers, mentors, district facilitators, administrators and reviewers. Bureau staff members are also collecting data to evaluate the impact of the program on student learning and on the retention of teachers. It is expected that TEAM will result in more valuable mentoring on effective teaching practices, increased communication between veteran and beginning teachers, and will lead to greater job satisfaction and teacher retention for both veteran and beginning educators.

Educator Assessment: The Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification is also responsible for researching and choosing the appropriate educator assessments for new candidates for certification in academic areas. Whether new tests are required in specific disciplines, such as reading or mathematics, or old tests are revised and updated by the testing companies that provide them, bureau staff research which of the new tests provide the best assessment tool, and organize the process for setting a cut score for Connecticut educators. In the 2011–12 fiscal year, new Praxis tests have been adopted to replace old tests being retired in the areas of elementary education, music, and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). In the case of elementary education, a newly designed test was adopted that has four subtests in reading/language arts, math, science and social studies; each test taker must achieve a passing score on each of the four subtests in order to pass. Additionally, a new elementary pedagogy test was adopted. The music test combined two tests into one test and the TESOL test was adopted for the first time.

Revised Educator Regulations: The Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification continued to lead the long-term initiative to update and revise educator certification regulations and guidelines. Proposed revisions have been updated to take new legislation and changing circumstances into account. These revisions have been reviewed by a variety of advisory committees with representation from educators, higher education institutions, professional organizations, parents, and students. The goals of this initiative are to improve teacher preparation and professional development of educators to ensure that educators are trained to meet the needs of the diverse learners in today's classrooms, staff schools — especially those in urban districts — with highly qualified educators, and to expand the opportunities for educators to become educational leaders. It is hoped that regulations will be passed that will result in benefits to all stakeholders. Higher education institutions will benefit from standards and guidelines based on current best practices; educators will benefit from more effective teacher preparation programs; students will benefit from more effective teachers.

Revised Common Core of Learning: Connecticut School Leadership Standards (CSLS): The bureau recently completed the two-year task of reviewing, revising and evaluating the new School Leadership Standards which involved the time, effort and commitment of Connecticut's leadership organizations (CAS, CAPPs, and CABE), higher education leadership programs, and hundreds of active educational leaders throughout the state. The CSLS indicators were broadly written to permit them to address a variety of district/school education leadership contexts, including administrator evaluation and setting professional growth goals. These standards will also be used in the accreditation of administrator preparation programs, and are the foundation upon which the Connecticut Administrator Test (CAT) is designed. The State Board of Education adopted these new standards in June 2012.

Accreditation of Educator Preparation Programs: There are 23 institutions of higher education and alternate routes in Connecticut with state-approved educator preparation programs. Each of these institutions must seek program approval by the state board of education every five years. Each also has the option of seeking national accreditation through the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), in addition to state program approval. The Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification is responsible for reviewing each of the programs at the 23 separate institutions, and for planning site visits and coordinating national accreditation with NCATE. In the fiscal year 2011–12, the Bureau organized and conducted reviews for six separate institutions and conducted two new program visits.

The bureau's program approval staff continuously reviews and revises program approval and accreditation procedures to improve the consistency, reliability, and validity of results. This year, new state program approval procedures were developed to more closely align with new national models of accreditation. This benefits higher education institutions by eliminating the need for unnecessary and burdensome duplicative efforts to establish that both state and national standards have been met. In addition, educators and ultimately students will benefit from more effective preparation programs based on current models. Beginning in 2012-13, the department will convene an Educator Preparation Advisory Committee (EPAC) to consider changes to educator preparation regulations and entry requirements.

- The chief performance officer will ensure that across multiple indicators, Connecticut's school districts receive actionable and timely information on student performance—fulfilling the Governor's charge to use performance-based accountability to drive continuous improvement. The chief performance officer will build a robust data infrastructure to help identify trends, problems, and opportunities in Connecticut's schools—developing metrics for status, progress, and goals for every school, district, and student group in the state. The performance office will accomplish this through the collection, analysis, reporting, and distribution of educational data. The office also provides empirical data to the state and U.S. Department of Education, local and regional school districts, as well as the public, to inform the educational decision-making process. The office oversees the collection of data through the Public School Information System and specific Web-based applications. The office has developed data warehouse applications in order to permit constituents access to the Department's existing data files so they may more effectively examine questions about schools and districts in the state. It manages the

Institute of Educational Sciences grants and the contract to develop a longitudinal data system to accurately track public school student performance over time, as well as to begin planning for the sharing of PK-12 and higher education data. Finally, bureau staff members produce documents such as the Strategic School Profiles and the Condition of Education, which state law requires, and develops research bulletins, data bulletins, and other information that documents the State Board's three goals and informs the public education community.

The Performance Office will, in close collaboration with the Talent, Academic and Turnaround offices, be responsible for guiding, informing and reporting progress on the state's responsibilities pursuant to its ESEA waiver. The state received a waiver from certain requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 in exchange for committing to leading aggressive interventions in the state's lowest performing schools and districts. Prioritizing and executing these intervention strategies are the primary responsibilities of the Turnaround Office.

- The chief turnaround officer will lead the design and implementation of intervention and support strategies in low-performing schools and districts (the Governor's second principle). This office will seek out best practices from the state and the country and work to promote high-quality school models. The Turnaround Office will oversee the Charter Schools office, the Education Technology office, the newly created Division of Alliance Districts and Commissioner's Network schools, the Bureau of School Improvement, and the turnaround specialist's office. The Turnaround Office will consolidate and shepherd all activities of the SDE related to improving schools whose students are chronically behind their expected levels of student achievement, and or that have identified groups of students with significant gaps in achievement relative to their peers.

The Turnaround Office will also house the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) and guides local education agency participation in CALI. The bureau supports local education agencies to institute a three-tiered accountability system of district, school and instructional-level data teams, which create professional learning communities that focus on improving instructional practices, evaluating the effectiveness of the practices on student achievement, eliminating ineffective practices and showcasing promising practices. The major activities of the bureau can be organized into four main areas of work: (1) the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI); (2) monitoring of school and district compliance with federal and state legislation in the areas of equity and safety; (3) administering grants to support improved outcomes for students in historically low performing schools and districts; and (4) sponsoring work in the area of formative assessment, specifically in the typically under-represented areas of early childhood and the arts.

The Department will help enhance access to early childhood opportunities through work of the Early Childhood Office (ECO). The ECO, a part of the Office of Policy and Management, will be housed with the Department to ensure maximum coordination with the state's K-12 programs. The Department continues to implement and build the structure necessary to carry out the statutory responsibilities of Public Act 12-116. The responsibilities of the Department's remaining divisions and bureaus for 2011-12 include:

The Chief Operating Officer is charged with advancing priority projects and improving the effectiveness, responsiveness, and efficiency of the Department's programs and services. The COO

will oversee the Governor's goal of removing the unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy that can impede student learning. In addition, the COO manages the Division of Family and Student Support Services, which houses the following bureaus and functions:

A. Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

Children's social, emotional, mental, and physical health greatly affects learning and achievement. The Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education focuses on major initiatives in these areas. Beneficiaries of this work include local education agencies, child and adult care centers, emergency shelters, daycare homes, adult education programs, school health and mental health professionals, business and community members, families, community-based organizations, and other educationally and health-related state and local agencies.

1. Nutrition and physical activity initiatives include wellness policy development concerning nutrition and physical activity; implementation of the Healthy Food Certification Program to ensure only healthy foods are sold to students; promotion of nutritional programs, such as school lunch and breakfast programs, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which offers free fruits and vegetables to low-income elementary aged children, and child and adult care food programs. Other strategies to address the mental and physical health needs of students include developing guidance, revising regulations, providing trainings, promoting a coordinated and systematic approach to school health, and offering technical assistance in the areas of school health/school nursing services, health and physical education, mental health and safe school environments. These strategies along with dissemination of research and evidence-based practices are aimed at assisting local district capacity to address and minimize these nonacademic barriers to learning.
2. Family services initiatives that the bureau is responsible for include the following:
 - a) Administration of state and federal after-school programs and federally funded 21st Century Learning Center grants: After-school programs (state and 21st Century Community Learning Centers) provide academic enrichment such as hands-on science or technology programs and activities to support student learning and development. Located in schools and community-based organizations, they provide services such as tutoring and mentoring, homework help, community service opportunities, as well as music, arts, sports and cultural activities. Programs also help working parents by providing a safe environment for students.
 - b) Family Resource Centers: The Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education administers the state-funded Family Resource Centers throughout the state. The Connecticut Family Resource Center concept promotes comprehensive, integrated, community-based systems of family support and child development services located in public school buildings. This model is based on the "Schools of the 21st Century" concept developed by Dr. Edward Zigler of Yale University. Family Resource Centers provide access, within a community, to a broad

continuum of early childhood and family support services, which foster the optimal development of children and families.

- c)* Homeless Education/McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act: The bureau administers the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which requires all school districts to ensure access to public education for children and youth experiencing homelessness and ensure success in school once enrolled. This includes ensuring choice of school; offering comparable services; ensuring that state or local policies must not keep homeless children from attending school; and that homeless children must not be segregated.
- d)* School-Family-Community Partnerships: The Department established the School-Family-Community (SFCP) Project to promote model programs that include the establishment of school-based teams (as required by Sec. 10-4g(a and b) of the Connecticut General Statutes) and policies to encourage parent-teacher communication (as required by Sec. 10-221(f) of the Connecticut General Statutes). The SFCP Project, built on the State Board of Education Standards for family and community engagement, is designed to help schools establish ongoing partnership policies and programs that promote family and community engagement in activities that support student achievement. The SFCP project provides training for school-based teams of parents, educators, and community members who take responsibility for planning and implementing an Action Plan for Partnerships linked to the school improvement goals.

Local schools and districts report in the annual Strategic School Profiles on measures to improve parental involvement, including, but not limited to, employment of methods to engage parents in the planning and improvement of school programs and methods to increase support to parents working at home with their children on learning activities (as required by Sec. 10-220 (c) of the Connecticut General Statutes).

Resources are provided to local communities to develop and implement training and leadership programs for parents through the Parent Trust Fund and the Parent University programs (as required by Sec. 10-40 of the Connecticut General Statutes and Public Act 12-1(233), June 12 Special Session, respectively).

- e)* School Governance Councils: School Governance Councils were created by the state's education reform law (Section 10-223e (g) of the 2012 supplement to the General Statutes) to enable parents, school staff, students (where appropriate) and community leaders to work together to improve student achievement in the state's lowest performing schools. School Governance Councils serve in an advisory capacity and are charged with assisting the school administration in making programmatic and operational changes to improve the school's achievement.
- f)* Youth Service Bureaus: The Department administers the state-funded grant to various communities across the state. These local communities began to develop youth service bureaus in the 1960s as a response to a growing number of issues

affecting youths. Currently, the role of Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) has been broadened to include both advocacy and coordination of a comprehensive service delivery system for youth with the goal of diverting youths from the court system.

3. Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 10-67–10-73(d) require that adult education services be provided by local school districts, free of charge, to any adult 16 years of age or older who is not enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school program. Adult education programs assist Connecticut’s educationally and economically disadvantaged residents in obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for enhancing employment, earning a secondary credential, becoming full partners in their child’s education, entering postsecondary education, and achieving self-sufficiency. Instructional programs in basic literacy skills, English language acquisition, citizenship, secondary school completion, and/or preparation for the high school equivalency exam are offered. Over 70 providers, including Connecticut school districts, community and faith-based organizations and other agencies, provide adult education services using a combination of local, state, and federal funds.

The CSDE implements the General Educational Development (GED) testing program in 23 test centers across Connecticut. This testing program enables more than 5,000 adults annually to take the GED Tests; around 3,000 pass the GED Tests and receive a State of Connecticut High School Diploma. The CSDE supports the statewide testing program by providing the full array of services that includes registration, scheduling, rosters, and answer sheets to testing centers, scoring, transcript development, and results dissemination. The CSDE also responds to nearly 7,000 GED diploma verification requests annually and provides extensive phone customer service to Connecticut residents.

In addition, the Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (CT AVHS) enables local providers of adult education to extend their Adult High School Credit Diploma Program (AHSCDP) and General Educational Development (GED) preparation services by offering online learning opportunities to Connecticut residents.

Local school districts and other eligible agencies providing mandated adult education programs are reimbursed by the State Department of Education on a cost-sharing, sliding scale based on the relative wealth of a district.

B. Bureau of Special Education

Federal and state law requires that special education and related services be provided to eligible students with disabilities from the age of 3 through age 21. The federal special education law is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and its implementing regulations, in combination with the state’s special education law found in Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-76a to 10-76h and the implementing regulations. These laws are intended to ensure that eligible students with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment in accordance with their individual needs. In Connecticut, special education and related services are provided by local and regional school districts. The Bureau of Special Education provides monitoring

and technical assistance and continues to target the needs of students with disabilities to ensure these students are demonstrating positive academic, functional, and behavioral outcomes.

C. Bureau of Choice Programs

Choice programs provide an opportunity for all Connecticut students and their families to make public school choices among a range of high-quality educational programs and settings. Public school choice programs maximize the opportunity for each student to achieve his or her highest potential by offering challenging, relevant, and rigorous curriculum and instruction. In addition, these programs provide a creative and flexible environment that values each student's unique abilities, talents, interests, and learning styles. Increasing student achievement and reducing racial, ethnic, and economic isolation are major goals of these programs, which aim to close the achievement gap and ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

D. Regional School Choice Office

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) established the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) in 2008 to serve as an information resource for families interested in public school choice options in the Greater Hartford Region. RSCO staff members provide information and assistance to parents and students exploring a wide range of prekindergarten through Grade 12 educational opportunities. The goal of the RSCO staff is to provide families with the information they need to make timely and informed decisions about their student's public school choice options given the child's age and interests. Hartford and suburban students in the Greater Hartford Region may apply to Open Choice, an interdistrict magnet school, technical high school or regional agro-science and technology program.

The Department will continue to be guided in the financial domain by the chief financial officer. The chief financial officer will pursue fulfillment of the delivery of additional state resources to districts with the greatest need, provided these districts adopt key reforms for academic achievement. The CFO manages the following bureaus:

- A. The Bureau of Information Technology reports to the Chief Financial Officer. The bureau has 13 staff members in the central office in Hartford and nine local area network (LAN) techs who are part of the bureau but stationed in the Connecticut Technical High School System. The bureau's staff members fulfill two primary responsibilities for the Department. The first is to provide technical support to all units in the Department, including the CTHSS. The bureau coordinates and oversees the implementation of the technology infrastructure associated with the CTHSS's renovation projects, and serves as a resource to local school districts in the implementation and use of hardware and software to support their programs and work in meeting the Department's goals. The second responsibility is to develop customized applications to support the Department in collecting and disseminating data that state and federal statutes require. The bureau also shares responsibility for developing the longitudinal data system to track public school student performance over time, provides constituents with tools to interact with the data, and promotes emerging technologies to keep the Department current with ever-changing technologies. Finally, the bureau works with the

Bureau of Enterprise Systems and Technology (formerly the Department of Information Technology [DOIT]) on agency projects and statewide technology initiatives, such as Internet filtering and mobile device security.

B. Bureau of Fiscal Services

The Bureau of Fiscal Services is responsible for the design, maintenance and management of all the major financial activities of the agency, including accounting, budget, spending plans, payments and purchasing. It provides developmental and systems assistance to the department in the area of information management, audit review and internal control systems. The bureau performs the functions required to record and report the financial transactions associated with all funds received and dispersed by the agency. In addition, it provides fiscal support and guidance to all operating divisions and the Connecticut Technical High School System. Further responsibilities include the reporting of the agency's fiscal performance and the promotion of prudent business practices that are consistent with state laws, regulations, and policies. The bureau also manages departmental operations such as travel, inventory, mail, duplicating, leases, vehicles, and telephones.

C. Bureau of Grants Management

The Bureau of Grants Management assists the Department in meeting its goals of achieving resource equity and equality of opportunity among the state's school districts. The bureau calculates and pays each town, school district, regional educational service center, and other eligible agency their share of over \$3 billion of state and federal grants in aid for education. The bureau is responsible for management of the Department's cash management system, manages grant balances through the preparation of the Department's grant appropriation budget, procures bond funds through the State Bond Commission, and prepares Status of Grants Reports. In addition, the bureau collects student, financial and statistical data for use in grant calculations and monitoring compliance with state and federal mandates and reporting requirements. Various reports are prepared including Estimated Local Revenues, Historical Grant Payments, Local and State Maintenance of Effort and State/Local/Federal Education Expenditures. The bureau also provides a vast amount of technical assistance to school business managers and town finance officers.

D. Bureau of Human Resources

4. The Bureau of Human Resources manages employee/labor relations, payroll, staff recruitment, and professional development for the central office and the Connecticut Technical High School System. Employee/labor relations activities include contract negotiation and interpretation, employee investigations and discipline, grievance, arbitration, discrimination complaints, Family Medical Leave Act/medical issues, Workers' Compensation, unemployment claims, employee assistance program, employee mediation, career counseling, classification and compensation, dual employment process, time and labor process, coordination of employee evaluations and employee retention. Staff recruitment includes oversight of the recruitment process for all administration, faculty, and staff of the Connecticut Technical High School System as well as all Central Office recruitment, ensuring that all merit system regulations and collective bargaining rights are

followed. Payroll activities include the timely processing of biweekly paychecks and employee health insurance, processing all changes that affect employees' compensation (i.e., promotions, demotions, leaves of absence, etc.), retirements, payroll deductions, employee leave accruals, longevity, merit increases, stipends, and collective bargaining increases. The bureau is also responsible for position management, position counts, refills, funding issues and recruitment. Professional development activities include succession planning, employee orientation, technical training, and state-mandated training. Office of Legal and Governmental Affairs

The Office of Legal and Governmental Affairs serves as general counsel to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner and the Department in general. The office further serves as the Department's legislative liaison with the General Assembly and acts as liaison with the Office of the Attorney General with regard to pending litigation, such as *Sheff v. O'Neill*. The office also administers statutorily required functions, including but not limited to the Teacher Negotiation Act.

5. Office of Internal Audit

The Office of Internal Audit works to ensure that education dollars reach intended recipients and serve intended purposes. It also ensures that funds and programs funded by the Department are protected from fraud, waste, and abuse.

6. Connecticut Technical High Schools

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) consists of 16 high schools, one satellite school, one technical education center, and two postgraduate schools for aviation maintenance technicians. CTHSS is the state's largest high school system serving over 10,700 undergraduates and had over 2,400 adult-student registrations in postgraduate and apprenticeship programs throughout the year 2011–12 school year.

CTHSS has continued its mission by contributing to Connecticut's economic vitality and economic self-sufficiency by bolstering the size and quality of Connecticut's skilled workforce. In response to current and emerging employer and industry workforce needs, the CTHSS prepares students for both postsecondary education and licensed apprenticeships or immediate productive employment. For the 2011–12 school year, the CTHSS served a ninth- through 12th-grade population that is 54 percent white and 46 percent minority, 37.5 percent female and 62.5 percent male. Improvements toward the integration of academic and trade technology preparation more fully prepare students for both career and college transition. Students participate in college career pathways programs, earning college credit while attending tech schools.

Trade technologies are reauthorized in accordance with Department of Labor occupational outlook data and reflect emerging technological advances such as Green technology efficiencies. The CTHSS Green Technologies Initiatives Program was made possible through outside funding sources. No state funds were used in providing Green Initiatives Technologies Training, and the infusion of the additional proposed Connecticut Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority (CEFIA) & Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund

(CEEF) Grants will allow for an expansion to nine schools and provide the much needed installation, diagnostic and troubleshooting equipment to perform repairs and service on high efficiency heat pumps, photovoltaic and solar thermal systems required, which will allow for training for the High Energy Efficiency and Solar Service industry. The CTHSS, along with the CEFIA and CEEF, is committed to developing and expanding the charging infrastructure across the state and will be using the electric vehicle chargers that are compatible with plug-in hybrid and electric cars. The CTHSS will also be expanding its Green Technology program with its first Geo Thermal system at Norwich Technical High School in the 2012–13 school year.

Since 1999, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has been awarding the GK-12 (Graduate STEM Fellows in K-12 Education) grants to universities across the nation. In 2010, The UCONN School of Engineering was awarded and begun a partnership with eight technical high schools, including A.I. Prince Technical High in Hartford. Through the GK-12 program, UCONN graduate students are able to present science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, (STEM), to classrooms through hands-on and exciting activities.

The PowerSchool Student Information System is used across the district including the PowerSchool Parent Portal Web application, which provides parents and students with the opportunity to see via the internet all information that is currently posted by instructors (which may include completed or incomplete homework assignments, grades for projects, tests, quizzes, attendance and discipline data as well as teacher comments).

Public Service

Connecticut is engaged in a major fiscal and programmatic commitment to strengthen the foundation of the state's education system. The goal is educational equity and excellence, and the Education Cost Sharing Grant is the major fiscal tool.

The effectiveness of public education in Connecticut is assessed in many ways. Key to measuring and improving the academic performance of students is the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), administered annually to students in Grades 3 through 8, and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), administered each year to high school sophomores. CMT testing is conducted in mathematics, language arts, reading, and writing in Grades 3 through 8 and in science in Grades 5 and 8 only, while the CAPT assesses high school students in mathematics, science, interdisciplinary reading, and interdisciplinary writing.

Supporting Connecticut's efforts to improve school performance and student achievement continued to be a top agency priority. Individuals throughout the Department provided technical assistance and support in a wide range of areas.

The Bureau of Data Collection, Research and Evaluation produces a wide variety of public reporting documents that are published annually at the school, district, and state level. These documents, among other uses, help to inform parents about the quality of education their children are experiencing. In addition, all consultants within the bureau regularly complete unique data analyses at the request of the public and various not-for-profit agencies with a stake in the education of Connecticut's children.

The Department established the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) in 2004 to provide professional development and coaching to accelerate the learning of all students and to close the achievement gap. This work provides evidence that schools with high rates of poverty and high percentages of ethnic minorities in their student populations can achieve high academic performance. When CALI began, districts receiving federal Title I funds and schools identified as in need of improvement under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act were offered training and technical assistance on a voluntary basis. In July 2007, the passage of state accountability legislation significantly strengthened this work. The legislation required the Department to identify low-achieving schools and districts for intensified supervision and direction by the State Board of Education. In 2007–08, the Department identified 12 such districts and the schools within those districts that were in year three or greater in need of improvement at the whole district level in reading, math, or both, using NCLB criteria. Three additional districts were identified in the 2008–09 school year. These 15 districts are now referred to as partner districts. In the 2010–11 school year, three new partner districts were identified. These districts are receiving access to the same extensive array of activities and opportunities to support accountability and improvements to the quality of teaching and learning as the original 15 partner districts. In 2012–13, the Department will shift focus to Alliance Districts, the 30 lowest performing districts in the state.

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Improvements/Achievements FY 2011–2012

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy declared 2011–12 the year for education reform in Connecticut. In December, the governor outlined six key principles to guide this effort, which culminated in Public Act 12-116, *An Act Concerning Education Reform*, and was signed into law by the Governor in May. The six principles as enacted in the final legislation are as follows:

Principle 1: Enhance families' access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities.

- Provides increased access to high quality pre-school with the creation of 1,000 new prekindergarten School Readiness seats, focused in high need, low performing communities.

Principle 2: Authorize the intensive interventions and enable the supports necessary to turn around Connecticut's lowest-performing schools and districts.

- Establishes the Commissioner's Network, enabling the state to provide the intensive supports and interventions needed to turn around 25 of the most chronically low-performing schools in Connecticut.
- Provides for the possibility that a subset of Commissioner's Network schools can partner with any of the state's regional educational service centers (RESCs), universities, or nonprofit entities including charter management organizations to raise student achievement.
- The legislation calls for each turnaround school to convene a Turnaround Committee made up of teachers, parents, and administrators to develop and submit a consensus plan for consideration by the Commissioner of Education.
- Under the legislation, the Education Commissioner has the authority to develop or modify plans with teachers and parents at the turnaround school.
- The bill also creates an ambitious pilot program to enhance literacy for students in kindergarten through third grade.
- Over the 2012-13 school year, the State Department of Education will build its Turnaround Team and begin the planning process for the main cohort of Network schools.

Principle 3: Expand the availability of high-quality school models, including traditional schools, magnets, charters, and others.

- State charters: The final bill provides significant new funding for the state’s underfunded state charter schools, while requiring enhanced accountability. The bill enables new charters to be opened in the state’s lowest-performing districts.
- State charter funding will rise from the current \$9,400 per pupil to \$10,500 per pupil in 2012-13; \$11,000 per pupil in 2013-14; and \$11,500 per pupil in 2014-15.
- State charters will be required to submit a recruitment and retention plan detailing efforts to serve priority student populations. The State Board of Education will hold schools accountable for adherence to these plans.
- The bill requires the State Department of Education to endeavor to launch two charter schools focused on dual language programs and English language acquisition in the coming years.
- Local charters: The final bill strengthens the local charter school law in low-performing districts, thereby encouraging local districts to open a local charter schools and increase parent choice.
- Local boards of education that reach agreement with their bargaining unit on the implementation of staffing flexibility models, and which submit high-quality turnaround plans, will be eligible for \$500,000 startup grants and \$3,000 per pupil operating grants.
- Agricultural Science Schools: The bill provides significant new funding for agricultural science schools (a \$1,425,000 increase).
- Magnet schools and technical high schools: Additional funding is provided for both magnet schools and technical high schools.

Principle 4: Unleash innovation by removing red tape and other barriers to success, especially in high-performing schools and districts.

- As a preliminary step, the State Department of Education will reduce the number of data forms it requires school districts to complete by one-third.
- The Governor announced the formation of a Red Tape Review Task Force that will propose ways for the state to reduce the regulatory burden on districts.
- In Connecticut’s ESEA/No Child Left Behind waiver application, high-performing and high-progress schools are granted greater flexibility.

Principle 5: Ensure that our schools are home to the very best teachers and principals — working within a fair system that values skill and effectiveness over seniority and tenure.

- The final bill requires annual performance evaluations of principals, administrators, and teachers, based on the consensus framework developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council.

- The bill strengthens professional development for educators, requiring job-embedded coaching as the predominant form of training.
- Excellent teachers will now be eligible for a “distinguished educator” designation.
- Over the coming year, the bill provides that the evaluation and support system will be piloted in a diverse group of eight to 10 school districts, followed by statewide implementation.
- The bill improves and reforms the state's tenure statute. These changes will ensure that (1) tenure is earned by effective teachers, (2) ineffectiveness — not merely incompetence — is the standard of dismissal, and (3) that dismissal proceedings will be fair, speedy, and manageable. Specifically:
 - Tenure will be awarded based on effective practice as informed by the new system of evaluation.
 - Ineffective teachers may be terminated.
 - Termination hearings will focus on whether the evaluation ratings are in accordance with the new evaluation program and are reasonable.
 - Termination hearings must occur within tighter timeframes and, for the first time places limits on the hours of evidence and testimony.

Principle 6: Deliver more resources, targeted to districts with the greatest need — if they embrace key reforms that position our students for success.

- The final bill and budget provides significant new funding to the Alliance Districts — the 30 lowest-performing districts in the state.
- Of \$50 million in proposed increased Education Cost Sharing funding, \$39.5 million is channeled to these 30 districts.
- The bill introduces a new level of accountability into funding for low-performing districts. To receive augmented ECS aid, the low-performing or Alliance Districts must embrace reform strategies, such as implementation of tiered interventions in their schools, extended learning time, strengthened reading programs for elementary school students, coordinated wraparound services for students, and the implementation of strategies to attract top teaching and principal talent. The State Department of Education will review and approve district plans before the new funding is disbursed.
- The bill provides a common and public budgetary template for all districts and schools (a common chart of accounts), which will enhance transparency for state and local education spending.

As mentioned above, the Department applied for and received a waiver from certain requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The waiver grants states greater flexibility in implementing school reforms. Among other things, the waiver will ensure that Connecticut:

- has greater flexibility with Federal Title 1 dollars, meaning that the state can now use that money to fund programs and reform models that are right for Connecticut and gets it to the students who need it;
- avoids a situation where nearly half of the state’s public schools would have been deemed “failing” — setting in motion massive restructuring and possibly even school closures; and
- creates a system that more accurately measures student achievement across all levels.

NCLB requires a series of sanctions for schools that do not achieve 100 percent student proficiency on standardized assessments by 2014. Connecticut’s waiver establishes a new, more comprehensive system of measuring student academic achievement and progress across all performance bands; adds writing and science assessments to the accountability system; and holds high schools accountable for graduation rates in addition to test scores. This system will inform schools’ eligibility for the Commissioner’s Network and will inform Alliance Districts’ work with schools of varying performance levels.

Connecticut’s waiver also calls for implementation of the Common Core State Standards and new assessments aligned to those standards in 2014-15; authorization of intensive interventions and supports necessary to turn around Connecticut’s lowest performing schools and districts; a new, enhanced system of teacher and principal evaluation and support; and reduction of red tape and undue administrative burdens placed on districts. All these initiatives, set forth as guiding principles for education reform by Governor Malloy, were affirmed or enhanced with passage of *An Act Concerning Educational Reform*

Finally, the State Board of Education also approved a major reorganization of the Department of Education to lay the foundation for implementing the reforms. A new organizational chart is included at the end of this report.

Educational Quality and Equity: *Sheff v. O’Neill*

Following the July 1, 2007, expiration of the Phase I Stipulation and Order in *Sheff v. O’Neill*, the state and the plaintiffs entered into an agreement known as the Phase II Stipulation and Order, which was approved by the court on June 11, 2008. The Phase II term runs through June 30, 2103, but may extend to include school year 2013–14 upon agreement of the parties. The goal of Phase II is to meet at least 80 percent of Hartford minority students’ demand for a reduced-isolation setting by year 5 of the stipulation. As an alternate benchmark, the state may satisfy its compliance obligation if at least 41 percent or approximately 9,400 of Hartford-resident minority students are in a reduced-isolation educational setting by year 5.

The state met the percentage goals of the first two years of the agreement, which measured compliance based on the percentage of Hartford resident minority students enrolled in a reduced-isolation educational setting. Year 3 was a transition year to a demand-based method of calculating compliance, therefore, there was no specific percentage requirement that the state needed to meet. The 2011–12 application cycle (year 4) marked the first year in which the *Sheff* compliance calculation was measured under the demand model rather than the traditional integration benchmark calculation. Under the demand calculation, demand is measured through a formula that uses data provided through the application, placement, and waitlist processes maintained by the Regional

School Choice Office. The state's success continued despite this transition and the state exceeded its 65 percent goal for year 4 by meeting 66.92 percent of Hartford-resident minority students seeking enrollment in a reduced isolation setting. Approximately 6,300 students are attending interdistrict magnet schools, suburban schools through Open Choice, technical high schools, and agricultural science and technology programs that meet the *Sheff* integration standard.

For the 2012–13 school year (year 5) — the final year of the stipulation — the demand goal increases to 80 percent. As an alternate benchmark, the state may achieve compliance if at least 41 percent of Hartford-resident students are in a reduced isolation educational setting. However, in the event of noncompliance, the stipulation allows the parties to agree to extend the agreement for an additional year and mutually amend the Comprehensive Management Plan upon a breach for failure to meet the 80 percent demand or 41 percent reduced isolation goals for year 5.

Year 5 of the Stipulation also marks the onset of negotiations for the next phase of *Sheff*. Under the terms of the stipulation, the parties must meet by September 15, 2012, to review the progress made under the stipulation and to commence negotiations for a Phase III settlement. Similar to Phase II, the stated purpose of the next phase of *Sheff* is to meet the demand for integrated education of Hartford-resident minority students.

Special Education

The Connecticut State Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education received notification from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, that the special education in Connecticut met the federal compliance and performance standards as measured by the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report.

Information Technology

The Bureau of Information Technology (BIT) supports technology application development and infrastructure operations for the State Department of Education. With over 70 applications currently supported and with many new key applications either in progress or being planned, the application development team is involved in all stages of development, deployment and support of all agency data systems. The BIT infrastructure operations team designs, deploys, and supports the computing infrastructure of the agency, which includes two central office locations (Hartford and Middletown) and the 18 technical high schools of CTHSS located throughout the state. The BIT team is also overseeing the development of all applications and data that make up the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). BIT continues to work with many other state agencies, the regional educational service centers, and over 200 school districts on education technology strategies, data and general technology needs. The following are projects completed this year, projects that are in progress and projects being planned for the coming year.

Completed: SLDS Teacher, Course, Student data collection and linkage application; campus wireless implementation for student mobile computing for all CTHSS Schools; two new parent modules for the Regional School Choice Office Lottery online application; relocation and upgrade of the CT Adult Reports System from an external hosting vendor to SDE; PowerSchool Student Information System upgrade and network re-engineering for CTHSS; network attached storage upgrade for the central office locations users (Hartford and Middletown); installation of

2,300 new computers within the agency including the technical high schools; National School Lunch and, Child and Adult Care Food Program application upgrades; 200 district technology plan reviews and approvals for E-Rate reduced telecommunication funding; enhancements to the following applications — Disciplinary Offense, Due Process, Special Education Application & Collections, Early Childhood Outcome, Non-Public School, Career and Technical Education Report, Directory Manager and the Connecticut Education Data and Reporting system;

In Progress: a P20W federated data system linking data from prekindergarten through Grade 12 through postsecondary to the workforce; the upgrade and implementation of a SAS assessment reporting system for internal and external use; IT Infrastructure upgrades associated with the renovation of Ellis and Wilcox Tech schools; the deployment of state core curriculum content to the SDE Moodle online learning system; a school interoperability framework pilot to link real-time data between the school districts and the applications associated within the State Longitudinal Data Systems to eliminate data collections; a direct certification child nutrition system linking the National School Lunch Program to Department of Social Services SNAP data; school construction grant management application re-write as part of the school construction department consolidation with the new Department of Construction Services; a National Transcript Center pilot with the Board Of Regents for electronic transcript data interchange between public Connecticut high schools and the state universities and community colleges;

Being Planned: design and implementation of a RESC pilot and State Department of Education statewide PEAC teacher evaluation system; design and implementation of an statewide Early Childhood Information; implementation of agency SharePoint document management and electronic workflow system; design and development of the restraint and seclusion tracking application; infrastructure preparation for Smarter Balanced Consortium online assessment testing system; certified and noncertified staff applications consolidation and surrogate database re-writes; IT Infrastructure upgrades associated with the renovation of JM Wright, Eli Whitney and Emmett O'Brien tech schools;

Connecticut Technical High School System

Connecticut's Technical High Schools continued to provide public education services to over 10,700 secondary school students statewide. As part of the curriculum, students are engaged in real-world work experiences that often also serve the public in other ways. Following are just some examples of such educational/community service activities from the 2011–12 school year:

Abbott Tech Culinary Arts Department worked with the Alternative Center for Excellence (A.C.E.) to prepare and help serve a Thanksgiving dinner for over 400 people. **Abbott Tech** students participated in a Clean City Danbury Day community service project where students cleaned garbage within a half-mile radius of the school.

Bullard Havens Tech Carpentry, Electrical and Plumbing students support Habitat for Humanity. Carpentry built and installed a handicap accessible ramp for the North End Community Center in Bridgeport. Hairdressing and Cosmetology students offer haircuts and hairdressing services to the elderly community. Culinary students baked turkeys and provided Thanksgiving meals to seniors at the Jewish Community Center in Bridgeport.

Bristol Tech's student council organized food drives for the Plymouth Food Bank. Manufacturing students made over 200 flag holders for the Bristol town council for flags that hang along Route 6 from Plymouth to Farmington. Culinary students provided over 250 Thanksgiving meals and Christmas treats for seniors in nursing homes.

Cheney Tech has partnered with MARC providing opportunities for students to work with adult disabled citizens. Over 30 **Cheney Tech** students provided tutoring services to Verplank Elementary students in the areas of reading, writing, and math.

Ellis Tech's Skills USA Club cooked and served meals for Thanksgiving to local senior citizens. Students also donated four tons of food during the annual food drive. Electrical, plumbing, and masonry students donated their skills in the construction of the TEEG building in Thompson.

Goodwin Tech Hairdressing and Cosmetology students regularly visited convalescent homes to provide cosmetology services and also provided haircuts to the homeless in New Britain. Carpentry students have participated in various New Britain events including Rebuilding Day and recently partnered with the CADD department to erect a gazebo in a YMCA camp in Woodstock.

Grasso Tech participated in the Toys for Tots Program and raised canned goods for the local Food Locker. Students also donated toiletries and sandals to Haiti.

Kaynor Tech's latest partnership is with The Bread of Life Food Pantry, which serves over 150 people every other week in Waterbury. **Kaynor** students organized food drives and helped to collect, sort, pack, and distribute food.

Norwich Tech students and staff donated 50 food baskets at Christmas time for needy families. Twice a month, students from **Norwich Tech** read to third-graders at Mahan School in Norwich.

Emmett O'Brien (EOB) Tech's National Honors Society students organized a "Buddy Walk" to support the Down's Syndrome Association. The EOB Action Team sponsored an "EOB goes Pink" benefiting the Cancer Center at Griffin Hospital. EOB students sold daffodils raising \$1,000 for the American Cancer Association. The CADD and Carpentry departments in collaboration with Valley United Way assisted in designing and constructing the "Harvest House" project that collected food and non-perishable items.

Platt Tech's Student Council conducted its annual can food drive collecting over 6,000 cans. **Platt's** National Honors Society conducted a "Toys for Tots" drive, and culinary students served a Thanksgiving dinner to the needy. **Platt** held a Pink Panther Day, raising \$2,000 for the Susan Coleman Foundation, and also held the annual Hoops for Heart basketball tournament.

Prince Tech culinary students held a Thanksgiving dinner with Warburton Church for 200 senior citizens. Haircuts were provided for senior citizens in Bloomfield semi-annually. Skills USA and Ecos Club helped clean up the Hooker School Nature Trail. Students were involved at Mary Hooker School in a Reading Program, and the carpentry students helped to build raised gardens.

The **Vinal Tech** Information Systems Technology Department worked in conjunction with the Middletown Senior Center to provide computer training to senior citizens once a month.

Students from **Whitney Tech** participated in the annual Autism Awareness Walk/Run. Two Student Leadership classes wrote and decorated personal notes to veterans and enclosed them with Valentine Cards. Hairdressing students provided hair and nail services to the Department of Children and Families from the Meriden Region. DCF families that help to take care of Connecticut's children were treated to a "Spa Day" event and the Culinary students catered a delicious luncheon for them.

At **Wilcox Tech**, SkillsUSA participated in "Penguin Plunge," which raised \$2,600 for Special Olympics and was recognized with the School House Rocks Award. The National Honors Society sponsored car washes benefiting the Meriden Humane Society and Boys' and Girls' Club. Carpentry sophomores built cabinets, countertops and a wheelchair accessible stove area to renovate a kitchen for a disabled man in Seymour.

Windham Tech participated in a food drive competition with several other technical high schools, with donations going to local food shelters.

Wolcott Tech offered its annual Thanksgiving Dinner for the needy in the community and served over 350 families in need this year. **Wolcott** also held a "Breakfast with Santa," providing children with toys, breakfast, music and a visit from Santa and his elves. The Connecticut Technical High Schools held over two dozen blood drives for the American Red Cross with Norwich Tech, Windham Tech and Goodwin Tech receiving awards and honors for their participation.

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schools. Students earn trade credentials and licenses as well as industry recognized certifications in many of the trade programs. Trade technologies are reauthorized in accordance with Department of Labor occupational outlook data and reflect emerging technological advances such as green technology efficiencies, automated manufacturing advances, and computer integration. Work-based learning programs enable Grades 11 and 12 to earn while learning. Extensive capital improvements and renovations are being made at Ellis Tech in Danielson, Whitney Tech in Hamden and Wilcox Tech in Meriden.

Communications with School Districts

The Department of Education communicates regularly with superintendents, principals, test coordinators, teachers, and other education officials throughout Connecticut's 166 public school districts, 1,133 public schools, and six regional education service centers. The Department employs and maintains a superintendent e-mail system and a principals' listserv system to provide timely and efficient communication with district and school leaders. The Department issues periodic Circular Letters to superintendents on key issues affecting districts, opportunities, and guidance on reporting responsibilities. An annual Back-to-School meeting for superintendents is held in August to discuss education law changes and Department initiatives for the coming school year. In December 2011, the Department initiated a superintendent's survey to gather feedback from school district leaders on education reform priorities, existing education regulations, the Department's most valuable services, and functions in need of improvement. The survey informed work on education reform legislation and the Department's reorganization.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws. The Department of Education does not unlawfully discriminate in employment and licensing against qualified persons with a prior criminal conviction.

The Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity, under the direction of the Commissioner, is responsible for ensuring the agency's compliance with a wide variety of federal and state laws and department policies that address equal employment and education. Activities related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act include investigating grievances, determining and documenting reasonable accommodations, and visiting work sites. The office also investigates complaints in the areas of employment practice, sexual harassment, disability/handicap, and age/sex under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

During this reporting period, the Department hired 95 employees — 42 white males, 33 white females, four black males, five black females, five Hispanic males, three Hispanic females, zero other males, and three other females. Of the 95 hires, the Department hired 42 goal candidates that consisted of three white males, 28 white females, one black male, four black females, two Hispanic males, one Hispanic female, zero other males, and three other females.

